
**HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD
STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION**

Property Address:	1625-1627-1629-1631 14th Street, NW	Agenda
Landmark/District:	14th Street Historic District	X Consent Calendar
		X Concept Review
Meeting Date:	March 22, 2012	X Alteration
H.P.A. Number:	12-257	New Construction
Staff Reviewer:	Steve Callcott	Demolition
		Subdivision

Architect Eric Colbert (Eric Colbert Associates), representing Alturas LLC (Jeffrey Schonberger), seeks final conceptual design review for a project involving rehabilitation, alterations and an addition to a former auto-showroom and three row buildings at 14th and R Streets, NW for residential and retail use. The Board approved the concept with minor comments in September 2006, proposed at the time by a different architect for the same owner. Due primarily to complications related to relocation of the Union Mission, which have now been resolved, the project did not move forward.

The Board's regulations establish a "sunset" provision for its recommendations, requiring the Board to confirm the direction it has given after two years has passed from the date of review. DCMR 10-C, section 332.1 states:

The Board's recommendations on an application, including an application for conceptual design review and preliminary review, remains in effect for a period of two years from the date of the Board's action granting conceptual approval. Upon expiration of this period, the applicant may return to the Board with a request for an extension of one additional period of two years for good cause shown. The Board is not required to reopen the review of the application, and shall not unreasonably withhold its approval of an extension. Upon expiration of the extension, or if the extension is denied, a new application shall be required for any further review of the project by the Board.

Property Description and History

The site, located at the southeast corner of 14th and R Streets, NW in the Greater 14th Street Historic District, includes four buildings most recently occupied by the Central Union Mission.

The most notable structure, 1631 14th Street, was built as a Studebaker auto showroom in 1922 in the monumental classical style prevalent during the 1920s. The building is five-stories (57 feet), with an intact double-height first floor showroom, and facades with limestone piers, steel windows, and classical acroteria decorating its roofline. The building was designed by architect Frederick B. Pyle and constructed by the Wardman

Construction Company. With the exception of its first floor windows being bricked up, the building remains intact to its original appearance.

The three buildings at 1625-1627-1629 14th Street were originally constructed in 1883 as three-story (42 feet tall) brick rowhouses with full-height projecting bays and raised entrances above English basements. Each had a two-story brick carriage house along the rear alley. The builder was John Sherman, a prolific developer in the late 19th and early 20th centuries best known today as the founder of the original Cleveland Park subdivision.

In a trend typical of 14th Street in the first two decades of the 20th century, 1625 14th Street was extensively remodeled in 1911 for conversion to a commercial building. Plans developed by architect Appleton P. Clark resulted in the removal of the 1883 façade and projecting bay, with the basement filled in and the first floor lowered to the sidewalk. A Mediterranean Revival styled façade was applied, with a tiled pent roof and a projecting storefront with an unusual tire design in its transom window. The rear yard was filled in with a one-story addition that connected through to the first floor of the carriage house. 1627 and 1629 14th Street were similarly converted to commercial use in a series of alterations between 1917-1925. On each building, the projecting bays were removed, the basements filled, first floors lowered, and rear yards enclosed. The two-story carriage houses behind each structure were either replaced entirely or substantially rebuilt. The upper floors of all three buildings were converted to rental apartments.

The buildings served a variety of tenants through the 20th century, many auto related. Particularly at the first floor level where all three buildings have been internally combined, and within the carriage houses, the buildings illustrate several generations of alterations and repairs. The upper floors, unoccupied since the 1960s, are deteriorated and exhibit some structural failure of joists due to water infiltration.

Proposal

The project calls for retaining and rehabilitating the four historic buildings and constructing a seven-story (75 feet) addition behind the three row buildings. The ground level spaces would be retail; the upper floors of the historic buildings and the addition would be residential. The addition would be set back approximately 30 feet behind the row buildings to the sixth floor; the seventh floor would be set back 40 feet. A single unified mechanical penthouse would be built on the auto showroom building to replace several existing penthouses.

The façade and two-story interior space of the auto showroom building would be retained and restored; there would be no modification to existing structure or character-defining features. The facades of 1627-1629 would be restored to their 1925 appearance with a new projecting storefront window, while the façade of 1625 would be restored to its 1911 appearance based on the Clark architectural drawings. The original main blocks of the three row buildings would be preserved, including their rear walls and wood framing; the deteriorated wood framing would be selectively replaced in-kind and supplemented by (rather than replaced with) a new fire-rated structural system. The one-story rear

additions and altered alley buildings would be removed. The condition of the buildings has been documented and assessed by Cagley & Associates Structural Engineers to assist in developing a plan for repair and reconstruction.

One level of below-grade parking would be provided in the basement of the auto-showroom building and under the three row buildings, which would remain supported above during excavation and construction.

The proposal has been revised in response to the Board's comments in 2006, eliminating the bay projections on the addition to simplify its mass; the Board found the combination of bays and balconies resulted in a busy composition that competed with the historic buildings. The front and north side of the addition (visible over the top of the corner showroom building) are proposed to be clad in a terra cotta or cementitious panels. The rear elevation and south party wall (which presumably would be covered by construction of a building) would be metal panel.

Evaluation and Recommendation

When reviewed in 2006, the Board found the proposed height and size of the building to be compatible with the larger historic buildings nearby and new projects currently under construction or approved by the Board. The Board found the set back of the addition behind the retained main blocks of the row buildings to be sufficient in not overwhelming the row buildings, and resulting in the addition being partially shielded from perspective views by the larger auto showroom building at the corner and a 75' tall project approved for the lot to the south. The height was found to be consistent with that allowed by the underlying zoning and not incompatible for an apartment building on a major commercial corridor which has buildings with a variety of heights. The additional setback of the seventh floor at the 65' level is a solution that the Board has requested and which has been used successfully on other projects in the neighborhood to lower the apparent height of new construction.

The elimination of the projecting bays on the addition's 14th Street elevation achieves the Board's goal of simplifying the design and making it a quieter background building. The proposed use of terra cotta on addition relates in color and material to the predominate use of masonry in the historic district.

The HPO recommends that the HPRB accept the refinements made in response to the direction it gave in 2006, confirm that the concept proposal remains consistent with the purposes of the preservation act, and grant a two-year extension to the concept.